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2007-05838/

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For Immediate Release
2007FOR0089-000789
June 14, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range

BELLA COOLA AWARDED COMMUNITY FOREST LICENCE

BELLA COOLA – The Bella Coola Resource Society will have greater control over management of nearby forests through a new probationary community forest agreement, Forests and Range Minister Rich Coleman announced today.

"Through this community forest, the people of Bella Coola can diversify their forest economy and more directly participate in managing the resources around them," Coleman said. "Since August 2004, we've offered new or expanded community forests to 34 communities."

The community forest will be managed by the Bella Coola Resource Society, which includes representatives from local government, residents and the business community. The new community forest consists of six tracts of land in the Bella Coola Valley, near North Bentinck Arm and Burke Channel totalling 128,663 hectares including alpine, glacier and forested areas. Under the probationary community forest agreement, the society will be able to harvest up to 30,000 cubic metres per year.

"This is an exciting time for Bella Coola." said Barry Brekke, president of the Bella Coola Resource Society. "Our new community forest will strengthen our economy by supporting local value-added forest businesses and it will open up opportunities to generate funds for community projects."

The community forest is within the Central Coast Land and Resource Management Plan area, and forestry operations will generally follow the ecosystem-based principles agreed to during that planning process.

Probationary community forest agreements are a form of legal tenure by which the Province transfers decision-making to communities that wish to more fully participate in the stewardship of their local forest resources. After an initial term of five years, the agreements may be extended for 25 to 99 years.

This is the second community forest agreement issued in the Bella Coola area this year. In February 2007, the Nuxalk Nation received a probationary community forest agreement granting them the right to harvest up to 20,000 cubic metres of timber from public lands.

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Media contact:

Jennifer McLarty
Public Affairs Officer
Ministry of Forests and Range
250 387-4592

Hans Granander
Executive Director
Bella Coola Resource Society
250 982-2515

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